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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0239
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NOUAKCHOTT 000487

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SUBJECT: MAURITANIA STILL SHORT \$4-\$5 MILLION FOR ELECTIONS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 409

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, Reasons 1.4 (b),(d)

(U) Key Points

-- A donors' roundtable organized by the African Union and Mauritania's transitional government met April 25 to solicit more funds for Mauritania's electoral transition. The funding drive has been successful, but Mauritania is still \$4-\$5 million shy of the \$22.5 million total election budget estimate.

-- Mauritania said it will be able to pay 30% of the costs. (Current contribution amounts by country are provided below.)

-- Ambassador used the Roundtable to announce locally the U.S. contribution to Mauritania's transition to democracy: approximately \$1 million through contributions to the UNDP Basket Fund, the National Democratic Institute, and through use of discretionary Embassy funds (such as SSH, DHRF, and PD).

-- The Minister of Interior acknowledged that "a lot still needed to be done" to resolve problems associated with issuing the national ID cards required for voter registration (reftel)

-- Virtually every speaker, including the AU co-chair, praised without reservation the transitional government's progress towards free and fair elections.

(C) Comments

-- One can, of course, cynically dismiss this event as a routine tin cup, feel-good exercise. But the Roundtable was actually quite significant for the Mauritaniens, and local media coverage was extensive.

-- For the Mauritaniens, the Roundtable symbolized the international community's recognition that something quite rare in the 46-year history of the Islamic Republic is underway: a good-faith effort by the state to organize free and fair elections and to strengthen democratic institutions, including political parties.

-- Mauritians crave such recognition and favorable attention, and the Roundtable provided it. For the moment, all the census problems, inter-communal tensions, and White Moor dominance issues were set aside to focus on all the good things that are happening here.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (U) An African Union (AU) sponsored Donors' Roundtable met in Nouakchott April 25 to solicit funds for Mauritania's electoral transition. Attendees included the AU, EU, UN, International Organization of Francophone Countries (OIF), and various Ambassadors and representatives from European, African, Middle East and Asian countries.

ELECTION COSTS

¶2. (U) The government presented a figure of 22,535,166 USD to fund the entire electoral process, through the March 2007 Presidential elections. This figure was broken into the 12 categories listed below. These estimates are based on the assumption that there will be approximately 1,350,000 eligible voters, 3,375 polling locations all staffed by a representative of the National Independent Electoral Commission, and that the list of registered voters will be opened prior to the Presidential elections to allow for additional registrants to be added.

National Independent Electoral Commission - 7,085,111 USD

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Civil Registry Assistance (ex: birth certificates) - 656,295 USD

Ministry of Justice Assistance - 92,384 USD

Production of National Identity Cards - 350,689 USD

Public Funding of Political Parties and the Press - 1,674,746 USD

Census / Voter Registration - 3,783,655 USD

Election Referendum - June 2006 - 1,908,242 USD

Legislative and Municipal Elections - November 2006 - 2,397,805 USD

Senatorial Elections - January 2007 - 93,638 USD

Presidential Elections - March 2007 - 2,421,150 USD

Technical Assistance - 1,060,500 USD

Management - 1,010,949 USD

THE NEED

¶3. (U) Governmental officials said that with the financial commitments currently received or committed to, and the government's budgeting of 6,029,583 USD for elections -- 30 percent of the total estimated costs -- 7,192,864 USD remained unfunded at the beginning of the Roundtable. Following the commitments made during the Roundtable by the countries listed below, the shortfall remains between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 USD, depending on how one assesses the contributions.

U.S. - 200,000 USD

Japan - 1,137,000 USD

Germany - 500,000 Euro

Senegal - 200,000 USD

African Union - 100,000 USD

14. (U) At the Roundtable the UN also committed to give an additional 300,000 USD for programming to help better integrate women into the political transition process.

15. (U) The list of donors and contributions received or committed to prior to the Roundtable was as follows:

UNDP - 1,060,500 USD for technical assistance

EU - 6,000,000 Euro

France - 500,000 Euro

Spain - 500,000 Euro

The Netherlands - 250,000 Euro

Egypt - 17,000 USD

WHAT TO DO WITH THE SHORTFALL

16. (U) The government and AU representatives thanked attendees for their "generosity" and "commitment to ensuring the success of the transition," adding that "we will need continued assistance to ensure the success of our efforts." The Minister of Finance Abdallahi Ould Souleymane Ould Cheikh Sidiya added that the government will look to "pre-finance" any commitments that are not received in time, but said the details of such a move would need to be determined in the UNDP Basket Fund Steering Committee meeting -- in which the U.S. will now have a permanent seat following the 200,000 USD

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commitment.
LeBaron